

U.S. Missile Defenses: Three Scenarios and their International Consequences

Jeffrey A. Larsen and James J. Wirtz

THE UNITED STATES IS DEVELOPING MISSILE DEFENSES THAT will offer some protection against ballistic missile warheads launched against North America.¹ The decision to deploy a modest national missile defense has already been made—it was signed into law in 1999. At that time, President William Clinton announced that implementing this decision would depend on an assessment of the nature of the threat, the technological capabilities of the system, its cost, and the impact on relations with allies and potential adversaries. While the goals of these limited defenses are modest, the U.S. effort to deploy a national or global missile defense system constitutes a major departure in U.S. defense strategy and may lead to unforeseen and, in some instances, unwelcome international political consequences. Since the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty on 26 May 1972, Americans have relied on the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter missile attacks against the United States. Faced with emerging threats produced by the proliferation of long-range ballistic missiles that can be armed with chemical, biological, or nuclear warheads, however, the idea of supplementing deterrence by using active defenses to destroy

*Jeffrey A. Larsen is a senior policy analyst with Science Applications International Corporation in Colorado Springs, CO. James J. Wirtz is Chairman of the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA. This article reflects the analysis in James J. Wirtz and Jeffrey A. Larsen (eds.) *Rockets' Red Glare: Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001). The views expressed in this article are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the United States Navy or SAIC.*

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>				
1. REPORT DATE 2001	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2001 to 00-00-2001		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE U.S. Missile Defenses: Three Scenarios and their International Consequences			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
			5b. GRANT NUMBER	
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
			5e. TASK NUMBER	
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School,National Security Affairs Department ,1411 Cunningham Rd,Monterey,CA,93943			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT				
15. SUBJECT TERMS				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 17
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified		
19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON				

incoming warheads is gaining domestic political support within the United States. Americans can expect to have some form of national missile defense by the end of the decade.

To take a fresh look at the missile defense issue, we assumed the United States *will* deploy missile defenses and has either modified or abandoned the ABM Treaty. We then estimated how these changes might affect policies and politics globally. By assuming the United States will soon deploy missile defenses, we do not suggest that critics of U.S. national missile defense (NMD) are necessarily incorrect, that new technologies will work flawlessly, or that only positive developments will flow from the deployment of missile defenses. Instead, we believe that by imagining deployments have already occurred, we could begin to identify the unanticipated or unintended consequences of a U.S. decision to build missile defenses. While this article was written before the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, its message remains important. The war on terrorism will not end other security threats, and may even heighten longer-term concerns over the proliferation of ballistic missiles and the threat they could pose to the United States.

THE POLITICS OF ESTIMATING CONSEQUENCES

Critics and advocates alike appear certain about what will happen if the United States deploys missile defenses. For instance, critics suggest missile defense cannot be achieved with today's technologies and that U.S. officials will not realize this until the worst possible time: during a crisis when their defenses are put to the test. For some critics, defenses are all cost and no benefit. They charge that missile defense produces arms races and alliance acrimony or simply will not work.² By contrast, NMD supporters highlight benefits while downplaying costs or technical uncertainties. They suggest the costs of NMD would be forgotten, for example, if the system were to stop an accidental missile launch from hitting an American city.

One-sided estimates are unrealistic. At a minimum, they ignore the opportunity costs involved in either deploying or not deploying missile defenses. Those involved in political advocacy feel no compulsion to explain the "down side" of their policies. Yet rarely do public policies produce consequences that are all good or all bad. At most, one can say that some course

of action will produce more good than harm, but there is always a price to be paid for whatever course of action is taken. Policies inevitably have multiple effects, most of them unintended or unanticipated.³

Two important observations suggest it might be unusually difficult to predict the consequences of deploying national missile defense or altering the ABM Treaty. First, because the superpowers agreed to limit missile defenses, the ABM Treaty constituted a *de facto* global ban on missile defense. The treaty's effects reached across the entire international community. When the United States and the Soviet Union decided not to deploy missile defenses, it was unlikely their allies would have the political will, to say nothing of economic or technical resources, to develop defensive systems on their own. Many governments have based their foreign and defense policies on the absence of missile defenses. British, French, and Chinese leaders, for example, could size their offensive missile forces knowing they would only have to penetrate a very limited Soviet missile defense around Moscow. The efforts of so-called rogue states to acquire long-range missiles also are encouraged by

banning significant missile defenses. The North Korean decision to produce a limited number of long-range missiles, for instance, is justified only in the absence of missile defenses.

Soviet and U.S. leaders agreed to live with mutually assured destruction to avoid an expensive arms race between offensive and defensive systems. Other states have been free riders on the absence of strategic defenses ever since. With the Cold War long over, however, the United States has become more sensitive to the costs of preserving this global regime banning missile defenses, especially when small, hostile regimes brandish long-range missiles armed with chemical, biological, or nuclear warheads. Whether or not growing U.S. disenchantment with the ABM Treaty reflects a “unipolar moment” of American global dominance or an increasingly multipolar world is a question best answered in hindsight.⁴ But the Cold War regime banning missile defenses is under pressure. As a result of the attacks on the U.S. homeland in September 2001, the United States is more likely than before to unilaterally improve its strategic defenses. On the other hand, the near-consensus of the Western world in opposing the ter-

rorists who perpetrated this attack, and which led to unprecedented international military cooperation, may also lead to accommodation between Russia and the United States in revising the treaty.

WHICH MISSILE DEFENSE? THREE SCENARIOS

Any effort to estimate the effect of missile defense deployment on the ABM Treaty and worldwide strategic relationships confronts an immediate obstacle. There is considerable uncertainty about the size and capability of the missile defense that eventually will be deployed by the United States. Although President Clinton decided not to announce definitive NMD plans in the final months of his presidency, his preferences probably would not have survived long into the next administration. During the 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush described his vision of a robust and far-reaching missile defense system. His plan is based on this overarching premise:

It is time to leave the Cold War behind. America must build effective missile defenses, based on the best avail-

able options, at the earliest possible date. Our missile defense must be designed to protect all 50 states—and our friends and allies and deployed forces overseas—from missile attacks by rogue nations, or accidental launches.⁵

In a major policy speech in May 2001, President Bush recommitted his administration to this path by calling for the end of restraints on missile defenses imposed by an outdated treaty that no longer served U.S. interests.⁶ Debate about NMD and the relevance of the ABM Treaty to U.S. national security can be expected to continue long after the Bush administration announces its missile defense plans. Given this evolving policy and political milieu, estimates of the impact of U.S. missile defense deployment must consider a range of policy options.

To respond to this uncertainty, we explore the consequences of three missile deployment and treaty options. The options vary in several ways. First, deployment options differ in terms of the number of incoming warheads they can

destroy and their ability to defend U.S. territory regardless of the direction of the incoming attack. Second, they vary in terms of where interceptors are deployed. Third, they vary in terms of their impact on existing strategic relationships. Some options do not significantly interfere with the ability of great powers to target the United States, while others are so extensive that they might even call into question the situation of mutual assured destruction that still exists between the United States and Russia. Fourth, the options reflect different international political climates. Minimal deployments are assumed to occur in a relatively benign diplomatic setting. More ambitious missile defense deployments are assumed to produce international acrimony.

Although the options considered here are based on policies under consideration or systems under development, they reflect general types of missile defenses that are not entirely dependent on specific systems. These options vary substantially in terms of the degree of protection they provide to U.S. territory, as well as the degree to which they reflect U.S. willingness to act unilaterally to achieve its security objectives. Assessing the impact on U.S. se-

curity alone might not be the best way to measure the international impact of U.S. missile defense deployment, but it does provide a way to characterize missile defenses that will remain relevant in the years ahead.

Scenario I: Limited Defense in a Cooperative Setting

The first scenario we consider is a “threshold” deployment of between 20 and 100 interceptors in a new base located in central Alaska that would occur fairly quickly (sometime before 2007). This deployment option is similar to the initial operational capability of the missile deployment plan (dubbed the “C1” option) advanced in the last years of the Clinton administration. Depending on the firing doctrine used in the defense (the number of interceptors that are fired at each incoming warhead), the smallest threshold system could engage a maximum of somewhere between five and ten warheads flying towards the United States over the North Pacific Ocean.

A threshold defense deployment would provide the United States with a capability to protect itself against an accidental missile launch or very small deliberate attacks that approach U.S. territory, especially

from the northwest. Such a limited deployment poses no realistic threat to the Russian or Chinese ability to strike the United States with warheads carried by intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). This option would provide the United States with a significant denial capability, however, against an emerging North Korean missile threat to American territory.

Although threshold defenses would provide very limited capability against missile attack, they would nevertheless pose a fundamental challenge to the ABM Treaty. Estimating the impact of any NMD deployment scheme on the ABM Treaty is highly contingent on the exact capability and location of the missile defense deployed. Moreover, the way individual treaty articles, amendments, negotiating records, and operational histories are used to interpret the interaction between defensive missile systems and the treaty greatly affects judgments about how the treaty would need to change to accommodate a specific system.⁷ It would be safe to assume, however, that the treaty would have to be amended to allow national missile defense. Although the treaty allows the deployment of a single missile defense site, it specifies that de-

fenses need to be situated near national capitals or ICBM deployment areas. Thus it would have to be amended to allow construction of the Alaskan missile defense site and the system's new X-band radar on Shemya Island. The treaty also would have to be modified to permit the use of space-based sensors in the missile defense architecture because they can substitute for ABM engagement radars. Additionally, the treaty would require modification because the booster for the planned NMD interceptor is used for commercial purposes; the treaty forbids giving non-NMD systems the ability to intercept strategic missiles.

Revising the ABM Treaty to allow these limited missile defenses would create some tense moments in Russian-American relations. But since a threshold defense would not present a credible threat to the Russian nuclear deterrent (even at the reduced force levels envisioned in a START III agreement), Russian leaders probably would want to continue to use arms control to constrain further U.S. defense deployments. They also might find it expedient to use ABM negotiations to obtain concessions from the United States on further reductions in offensive strategic forces or for concessions in other areas. ABM

negotiations could be used to move the Russian-American strategic relationship away from the Cold War model based on mutual vulnerability, charting a new course in great power relations that increases the role of defense in some sort of mutual security arrangement. Negotiations could remain a bilateral affair, which would greatly ease the task of reaching a settlement. Ideally, revising the ABM Treaty could lead to improved relations between Washington and Moscow if the give and take over NMD led to greater security cooperation.

In contrast, if Washington and Moscow reached the mutual expectation that it was in the best interest of the other side to preserve the ABM Treaty it could lead to deadlock and acrimony. Both sides would look to their negotiating partner to compromise over NMD deployments. They might interpret a lack of negotiating progress as evidence of some potentially dangerous departure in strategic policy. We assume that cooler heads will prevail. Russian and U.S. negotiators will find some way to accommodate the deployment of a modest interceptor force within the arms control regime limiting strategic defenses.

Our limited defense scenario

embodies what in fact would be a major change in the existing arms control regime: a negotiated change in the ABM Treaty to permit limited national missile defenses.

Yet, our limited defense scenario would not affect the bargain at the heart of the ABM Treaty because it would not reduce the vulnerability of the American people to a Russian nuclear attack. Countries with small missile arsenals that were seeking to use these arsenals to gain leverage over the United States would see the value of their strategic investment diminished. The United States might become more active in world affairs, intervening more in regional disputes or engaging in preventive attacks to block missile proliferation in the developing world. This is the sort of activity that worries America's European allies. They fear that the absence of strategic defenses will make them the logical retaliatory target following some U.S. military action. But by strengthening U.S. escalation dominance, missile defenses could increase the ability of U.S. military forces to deter the outbreak of war. Herein lies one of the paradoxes of the NMD debate: Threshold C1 might undermine crisis stability because it could embolden U.S.

policy makers to become more interventionist, while at the same time making confrontation less likely in the first place by strengthening deterrence.

The real source of international concern about a Threshold C1 deployment is that many would see it as a harbinger of things to come. Chinese leaders, for example, believe that the United States will continue to enlarge its defense capabilities, diminishing the benefits China is likely to gain from its strategic force modernization programs and making Washington more willing to intervene in future disputes over Taiwan. NATO allies worry the United States might be tempted to withdraw into a Fortress America, even though 100 interceptors at a single site would offer a weak defense of the battlements. The sale of advanced countermeasures to small missile states in response to Threshold C1 deployments would do little to ease these kinds of concerns, and could make matters worse by increasing pressures on U.S. policy makers to improve their missile defenses.

Scenario II: Enhanced Defenses and Limited Cooperation

The second scenario we consider is more speculative, even though it also is based on a plan proposed

by the Clinton administration (the C3 plan) and other systems that are already under development. In this scenario, we expanded the Clinton administration's C3 proposal to deploy 250 ground-based interceptors by adding sea-based and air-based systems currently under development. This "C3 Plus" system would have limited restrictions on radars and associated command and control networks, permitting the maximum operational effectiveness of planned national missile defenses. It would encompass several systems that realistically could not be deployed before 2011, and would provide a more robust defensive capability than the Threshold C1 system. A C3 Plus system would greatly reduce U.S., and in some cases allied, vulnerability to missile attack. A C3 Plus deployment might be a logical answer to critics who charge that Threshold C1 deployments come with all of the drawbacks and few of the potential benefits of missile defenses. C3 Plus also includes theater systems that were not necessarily intended to defend U.S. territory, but which could be included in missile defenses to create a layered defense or to supplement NMD systems in a crisis. For example, it might be possible to integrate the Navy Theater Wide

and Air Force airborne laser systems into a national missile defense to increase its ability to defeat a missile attack.

Capability 3 was proposed by the Clinton administration in 1999 as a long-term option; the C3 Plus option we describe here is based on this proposal and reflects early plans by the Bush administration for a more robust missile defense.⁸ In our scenario, these enhanced defenses would include interceptors located in both Alaska and Grand Forks, North Dakota. The latter location would improve defense against missiles approaching the United States from the northeast and would help provide overall coverage of the United States. If moved close enough to an opponent's missile field (such as off the coast of North Korea), the airborne laser could destroy missiles while still in their boost phase. Navy warships also could be deployed off America's shores to bolster defenses along likely threat axes. Given expected intercept rates, C3 Plus might be able to stop upwards of one hundred warheads from reaching the United States. If the United States were to deploy a C3 Plus system, it would have a significant impact on the international strategic landscape. C3 Plus would protect the

United States from attacks launched from a variety of directions and would "raise the bar" for states interested in holding U.S. urban areas at risk of ICBM attack. Small states such as North Korea, Iran, or Iraq would be forced to look for alternative delivery methods to attack the United States. Without outside technical or financial help, it would be unlikely these small states could build or launch enough warheads and countermeasures to penetrate this system. Similarly, Chinese leaders would face significant technical and quantitative challenges in any effort to create a secure second-strike force directed against the United States.

The enhanced capability of the C3 Plus system would come at a significant price in terms of arms control. In addition to the changes made to accommodate a Threshold C1 deployment, the ABM Treaty would have to be amended to allow for construction of two ground-based interceptor sites and to allow air-based and sea-based NMD.

A C3 Plus system would have its greatest impact by challenging China's quest to modernize its strategic nuclear forces, eliminating China's free ride on Russian-American cooperation in limiting missile defenses. A vigorous Chi-

nese response to these deployments could set off a chain reaction in Asia affecting Indian, Pakistani, Japanese, and Taiwanese defensive doctrines and deployments. Chinese efforts to complicate the defense problems faced by U.S. policy makers by providing advanced missile or weapon technologies to America's adversaries also could destroy the nonproliferation regime.

C3 Plus would strain the international arms control regime because it would be difficult to construct a treaty that would curb the break-out potential inherent in such a robust defense deployment. If Russian and American offensive forces continue to decline in numbers, a C3 Plus system might be expanded rapidly to deny Russians the ability to hold U.S. targets at risk. Moreover, Chinese officials would have an interest in the details of a renegotiated treaty because they would want to discern exactly how a new treaty might interact with their plans for modernizing their strategic forces. An ABM Treaty that accommodated a C3 Plus system might have to become multilateral. But it would be difficult to construct a multilateral arms control treaty of sufficient issue depth to restrict missile defenses in a meaningful

way. Russian officials might cooperate in renegotiating the ABM Treaty under these circumstances, but the negotiations could be a source of acrimony unless a political agreement to integrate defenses into the Russian-American strategic relationship existed.

Revising the ABM Treaty to permit a C3 Plus deployment probably would strain Russian-American cooperation in arms control to the breaking point. Although it would still be in Russia's interest to constrain U.S. missile defense deployments in an arms control agreement, critics might correctly charge that a C3 Plus system would provide the United States with a break-out capability. In other words, by quickly adding interceptors to an existing defense architecture, U.S. forces could greatly reduce Russian second-strike capabilities against the United States. No matter what the final outcome, Russian-American treaty negotiations to allow a C3 Plus deployment would be highly acrimonious. Even if an agreement about the treaty were finally reached, Russian leaders might believe that they had been strong-armed by their American counterparts.

Supporters of robust missile deployments would object to this

pessimistic picture of the diplomatic consequences of a U.S. decision to deploy a C3 Plus system. Bush administration officials might suggest that robust missile defenses could eliminate deterrence as the cornerstone of Russian-American strategic relations. C3 Plus could serve as the basis of a cooperative transition to a world where defense is dominant and offensive systems are reduced in number and capability. Robust defenses could help Russians and Americans alike finally put the Cold War behind them. For NMD advocates, C3 Plus is a logical response to the emerging threats facing the United States.

Scenario III: Unlimited Defenses, Unconstrained by Treaty
The third scenario assumes U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty—a scenario much more likely since the Bush administration took office and the attacks on the U.S. homeland. Defense deployments would no longer be constrained by an arms control regime. The opportunity to increase Russian-American cooperation by creating a revised arms control regime is unlikely to emerge under these circumstances.

U.S. officials would be free to deploy whatever weapons or sen-

sors they considered necessary or technologically feasible. In all probability, they would attempt to deploy robust defenses as soon as possible—otherwise why would they be eager to eliminate the ABM Treaty? But given the long lead times involved, it might be nearly two decades before revolutionary kinds of systems, for example the space-based laser, can be deployed. It is difficult to say, however, how effective advanced defenses might be given the performance uncertainties about even limited defenses based on relatively proven technologies.

The end of the ABM Treaty would signify that U.S. policy makers, or Russian leaders for that matter, had decided that unilateral measures offered a path preferable to cooperation as a means of guaranteeing their national security. Alternatively, an abrupt end to the ABM Treaty might be caused by some diplomatic failure produced by domestic political pressures or miscalculation. But a U.S. decision to withdraw from or abrogate the treaty also could be a response to an abrupt change in the strategic environment. In this case, an end to the ABM Treaty would constitute a consequence rather than a primary cause of changes in the international system.

Arms race and crisis instability could become commonplace in a world of strategic defenses left unconstrained by any treaty, or in the absence of a new consensus among the great powers about the role of defenses in national security. Russia might decide that the effort to run an arms race with the United States was not worth the cost and find some new basis for Russian-American strategic relations. Equally likely, however, would be a Russian decision to join with China in a diplomatic campaign to resist American unilateralism. Sentiments among NATO allies probably would swing between the traditional fears of abandonment and entrapment. U.S. allies in Asia might work quickly to integrate their defenses into an emerging U.S. defense architecture to protect themselves against an increasingly suspicious China. Small states such as Pakistan, Iraq, North Korea, Israel, and Iran might try to improve their offensive and defensive missile capabilities by capitalizing on a resulting breakdown in the Missile Technology Control Regime or the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In sum, the United States could find its real security actually diminished despite the deployment of robust defenses.

RECURRING THEMES IN THE DEBATE ABOUT NMD AND TREATY REVISION

Our analysis identified several unexpected observations about the strategic situation facing national governments at the dawn of the twenty-first century. First, unintended consequences would follow not only in the wake of efforts to modify the ABM Treaty, but also by continuing to abide by a treaty that no longer reflects strategic or technical realities. For example, theater ballistic missiles have grown more capable in the 30 years since the treaty was signed, but the restrictions placed by the ABM Treaty on national missile defenses are beginning to impede the effort to develop theater missile defenses. While many hoped that the ABM Treaty would be a “living document” that could be adapted to changing technical and strategic circumstances, that hope has not been realized. The proliferation of theater offensive capability, defensive responses to meet that capability, and the technological advances that made such responses possible, all combine to raise treaty conflicts. Today the United States is prevented from responding to threats that did not exist when the treaty was signed, but it is difficult

to imagine that the ABM bargain with the Soviets really was intended to leave Americans vulnerable to a North Korean missile threat. The key questions are whether the objectives the treaty was intended to meet are still valid as we enter the twenty-first century, and whether the treaty can be modified to meet legitimate security concerns now that the Cold War is over.

Second, while most observers agree national missile defenses will enhance U.S. power projection capabilities, they disagree about the political and strategic consequences that will flow from this new capability. Would the deployment of missile defenses enhance isolationist tendencies within the United States, as the European allies fear, or allow America to intervene more readily in international disputes, as China and many other states believe? Limited NMD capabilities would increase the ability of the United States to project power into regional trouble spots with less fear of retaliation, but it is uncertain whether this would have a positive or negative affect on the course of international relations.⁹ Moreover, the impact of defense deployments will vary depending on the amount of offensive missile capability possessed by

potential U.S. opponents. Ultimately, the diplomatic path to deployment, reflected in efforts to renegotiate the ABM Treaty, may have a greater impact on crisis and arms race stability than the specific capabilities of U.S. missile defenses.

Third, modifying the ABM Treaty and deploying theater and national missile defenses eventually will be viewed primarily as an Asian issue. Reactions in China to the possibility that Chinese strategic force modernization might no longer be able to capitalize on Russian-American security cooperation raise the possibility that U.S. NMD deployments could lead to a cascading effect in the Asia-Pacific region as China's neighbors react to Beijing's security decisions. NMD proponents and opponents both neglect the serious ramifications of their decisions in far-away parts of the globe. South Asia is the region most likely to experience a cascading effect following a U.S. decision to deploy NMD. Japan and Taiwan also would have to adjust their defense policies to reflect any American decision. For better or worse, U.S. NMD deployments and changes to the arms control regime governing strategic defenses are likely to clarify Chinese national security

objectives in the years ahead. These decisions may not be to Washington's liking. China, after all, sees a dark side to U.S. plans to deploy NMD, one that includes U.S. desires for global hegemony and an overt U.S. campaign to stem China's emergence as a great power. The United States needs to decide whether it considers China a "Little Russia" or a "Big Rogue." If the former, then the United States should accept China's effort to develop a secure retaliatory capability for reasons of stability along the classic deterrence model.¹⁰ If the latter, however, then NMD should be directed at the potential Chinese threat.

RECOMMENDATION: DEPLOY AND NEGOTIATE

The United States finds itself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it can seek to increase its security through largely unilateral action, but at the risk of a harsh international response. The arms race and crisis instability unleashed by highly capable defenses deployed in the absence of a revised ABM Treaty probably would undermine America's strategic position over the long term. Given the likely international ramifications, are deploying missile

defenses and modifying the ABM Treaty worth the modest protection NMD will provide? On the other hand, can the United States avoid defense deployments given the proliferation of ballistic missile threats and domestic demands for protection? No matter how policy makers attempt to resolve this missile defense dilemma, real choices will have to be made concerning strategic interests that consider the long-term international consequences of U.S. decisions.

Although Bush administration officials suggest missile defenses can be used to help transform strategic relationships, what is missing from today's debate about NMD is a vision of how U.S. policy makers will use arms control and national missile defense to shape the future international security environment. NMD supporters are correct to claim that the missile threat is growing and that the bargain at the heart of the ABM Treaty is nearly obsolete. But this changing threat environment does not justify abandoning formal and unilateral arms control initiatives that can pave the way for the strategic transformation envisioned by the Bush administration. The fact that today's proponents of NMD are often yesterday's arms control critics is regrettable, because old

biases can blind officials when it comes to the important role arms control can play in legitimizing missile defense deployments. Arms control negotiations can provide a forum to communicate military concerns and to explain changes in force structure and doctrine that will inevitably occur in the future. It can help concerned states repeatedly adjust not only their forces, but strategic concepts and plans as missile defenses become increasingly robust. By contrast, a prompt U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty would send a shock wave throughout the international community, causing unforeseen and negative consequences in the decades ahead.

The United States should deploy missile defenses that provide modest protection of the American homeland, deployed forces, and possibly allies. Exactly what sort of system will be deployed—a few dozen ground based interceptors, a sea-based system, or even the airborne laser—remains a matter of conjecture. But limited defenses make strategic and diplomatic sense. A modest missile defense system would stretch the current technological limits without breaking them, can remain fiscally viable, and would allow the United States to ap-

proach Russia with a proposal to renegotiate the ABM Treaty to allow for theater and limited national missile defenses in a cooperative defensive regime. This negotiation process might even be broadened beyond a bilateral arrangement to include other key states in a multilateral forum, one that could lead to a successful transition to a world in which missile defenses have a role to play in maintaining international stability.

NMD highlights the danger of making policy decisions without considering immediate international reactions or longer-term systemic consequences. The debate over missile defenses focuses on current threats and technical challenges. But deployment decisions and treaty negotiations have to take into account the strategic setting 20 years from now, when robust defense systems become fully operational. Too often, both critics and supporters treat the decision to deploy missile defenses as an end in itself, not part of a transition to a new, more cooperative security framework. If it fails to foster this transition, the United States will find itself either wedded to an increasingly irrelevant arms control treaty or saddled with

potentially ineffective and provocative missile defenses.

ENDNOTES

1. For a concise description of the Clinton administration's plans for national missile defense, see "Remarks of the Honorable Walter B. Slocombe, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, to the Center for Strategic and International Studies Statesmen's Forum, November 1999," published in *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April/June 2000): 167-174.
2. Stephen W. Young, for example, sees only a downside to national missile defense: "by building national missile defenses, the U.S. may stimulate new threats, unraveling the entire post-Cold War structure for controlling nuclear and missile technology and weapons. U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty would jeopardize four non-proliferation and disarmament treaties—the NPT, the CTBT, and START I and II—as well as the potential for START III, for even deeper cuts, and for the ban on fissile material production. Russian officials have even hinted that the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty, which completely eliminated nuclear-tipped missiles with a range of 500-5,500 kilometers, could come into question. Prospects for mutual, cooperative steps to reduce nuclear dangers outside the treaty process would also diminish sharply." Stephen W. Young, *Pushing the Limits: The Decision on National Missile Defense* (Washington, DC: Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Danger, April 2000), 25.
3. Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
4. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 78, No. 2 (March/April 1999): 35-49; and Gary Wills, Bully of the Free World," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 78, No. 2 (March/April 1999): 50-59; and William Pfaff, The Question of Hegemony," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 80, No. 1 (January/February 2001): 221-234.
5. "New Leadership on National Security," speech by George W. Bush to the National Press Club, Washington, DC, 23 May 2000, on the Internet at www.georgewbush.com.
6. Speech by President George Bush on national missile defense at National Defense University, Washington, DC, 1 May 2001, on the Internet at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bushtext050101.htm.
7. For a discussion of how various NMD systems would require changes in the existing AMB Treaty regime, see Dean A.

- Wilkening, "Amending the ABM Treaty," *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 29-45. For the treaty text, see the U.S. Department of State at www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html.
8. For general guidelines on the Bush missile defense plans, see the president's two speeches on 23 May 2000 and 1 May 2001 and John Isaacs, "Pebbles and All," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (September/October 2001): 22-23.
9. For more on this concept, see Richard J. Harknett. "Global Stability in a Changing Defense Environment," Chapter 5 in Wirtz and Larsen, eds., *Rockets' Red Glare*.
10. This construct regarding China was developed by Brad Roberts for his chapter in *Rockets' Red Glare*.